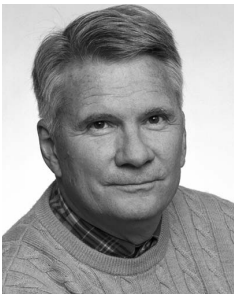


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CIRULI ASSOCIATES
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Colorado – The Battleground State

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After flirting with their extremes, Colorado Republicans and Democrats picked centrist candidates to face off in this November's U.S. Senate battle.

Democrat and Republican primary voters appeared more focused on winning in November

rather than sending messages about such issues as ending the war or stopping the "gay agenda." Such political pragmatism, in which electability trumps ideology, has been the watchword for the 2004 election. John Kerry was largely selected by Democratic primary voters in Iowa and New Hampshire because he was judged the strongest candidate against President George W. Bush.

Both Democrat Ken Salazar and Republican Pete Coors were seen by party leaders and pundits as the most electable of the available field. In fact, Coors was encouraged into the race by the White House, and was quickly endorsed by top Colorado Republican officeholders and funders afraid of losing the Colorado Senate seat after Ben Nighthorse Campbell's surprising departure.

With these two nominees, the fall contest has the elements of being an historic battle – hard fought, expensive and close.

The Senate race pits two longtime Colorado families against each other. As Ken Salazar traveled the state, his advertisements highlighted his deep roots in the Hispanic San Luis farm and ranch communities. Pete Coors, from the multi-generation German brewing family of Golden, already has 100 percent name recognition.

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Cartoon by Tim William
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Following state party conventions in which activists gave the nod to more extreme candidates, the winners that emerged from the primary are the moderates. Now, the candidates will fight over the critical center of the political spectrum.

Salazar was able to ignore his under-financed opponent Mike Miles. And although he made it through the primary unscathed, he also failed to establish a strong position on critical issues, such as the war, health care and taxes.

Coors, in his maiden election, was in a furious battle with former Congressman Bob Schaffer. And although he was hit with negative advertising and stumbled on several debate points, he picked up some valuable experience and won by a surprisingly large margin.

In fact, the biggest primary story was the failure of the conservative political machine operated by former U.S. Senator Bill Armstrong. Its well-financed attack advertisements failed to win even a majority of its main audience, El Paso County Republicans. Armstrong's endorsement and resources have been key elements in victories of past conservative candidates Wayne Allard, Tom Tancredo and Marilyn Musgrave.

This time, however, the attacks were widely criticized as damaging party unity, and appeared flawed in basic strategy. The Coors' family credentials with conservative voters is indisputable. Pete's father, Joe, helped found and finance the modern Republican party and the Reagan Revolution, which still dominates today. Bob Schaffer's lesser known career and his camp's out-of-context attacks were no contest.

Both senate primary winners enjoyed superior financing. Coors set a new Colorado spending record for a primary. The national parties will now reach to fill their candidates' coffers. Given that control of the U.S. Senate is potentially at stake, expect a record level of spending – \$15 million to \$20 million.

A considerable amount of money will come from "independent" political communities. Similar to their participation in the primary, they will make the contest more negative and shrill.

Polls earlier in the year showed Salazar ahead of both Coors and Schaffer. It reflected Salazar's high name identity as a two-term State Attorney General, and his

popularity among rural voters not typical of Democrats. That advantage is likely to fade by early September. By then, Coors will have a unified party and a personal identity as a successful political candidate – not just the name of a popular brand of beer.

Importantly, the Colorado Republicans still have an advantage of 180,000 more registered voters over Democrats. That advantage has been their key to dominating the state's recent political history.

The likely closeness of the senate race is helping move Colorado, a perennial backwater in presidential politics, to the forefront. Salazar's entrance into the race and his ability to attract independent and Hispanic voters to the ticket got the attention of Democratic presidential strategists and is helping put Colorado in play. The Republicans responded by adding Colorado to their battleground list. In the last three weeks there have been three visits by the presidential and vice presidential candidates to Colorado. Controlling the U.S. Senate and winning the presidential election could be decided, in part, by Colorado's 2.8 million voters, which would be an historic role for Colorado.

The U.S. Senate primary winners have already raised record amounts before the primary. Peter Coors reported \$2.6 million at the July 21 filing deadline and Ken Salazar pulled in \$2.9 million. They are more than halfway to the record \$10.3 million spent in the 2002 Wayne Allard vs. Tom Strickland race.

Colorado U.S. Senate Election Results and Spending

Year	Candidate	Vote %	Spending by Candidate Committee (In millions)
2004 (Sept.)	Coors	-	\$5.3
	Salazar	-	\$6.0
2002	Allard	51%	\$5.2
	Strickland	46%	\$5.1
1998	Campbell	62%	\$3.0
	Lamm	35%	\$1.8
1996	Allard	51%	\$2.2
	Strickland	46%	\$2.9
1992	Campbell	52%	\$1.6
	Considine	43%	\$2.2

Spending in Colorado U.S. Senate elections, although low in terms of national standards, has been growing rapidly in the last decade. The cost of U.S. Senate elections in Colorado has doubled since the record setting 1996 first Allard vs. Strickland race and their 2002 contest (\$5.1 million to \$10.3 million in 2002). The 2004 U.S. Senate race will easily reach \$15 million. If the race is close, as expected, \$20 million is possible.

Source: Almanac of American Politics; Ciruli Associates